

# Local MP Visits SHSG!



**B**ayo Alaba, the local MP for the Southend East and Rochford constituency recently visited Southend High School for Girls to discuss his plans for

Southend, current political affairs, and his experience in the House of Commons. As stated on The Bayo Alaba website, Mr Alaba is the first Labour Party MP to be elected in Parliament for the constituency of Southend East and Rochford, a milestone for the Labour Party in the local area of South Essex, as commonly, the area of Southend has voted for the Conservative Party. The MP shared both his upcoming goals for the area of Southend East and Rochford, and also information on his non-political life, with sixth form students.

Born and raised in East London to Nigerian parents, Mr Alaba explained aspects of his pre-political career. The MP originally earned a degree in manufacturing and business in the late 90's, leading to a lengthy career in business in East London. Mr Alaba still operates as a landlord, allowing him to provide entrepreneurial skills to the seat of Southend East and Rochford. Mr Alaba explained his previous role as a Paratrooper. He recently took part in the events of the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings. He reflected on how his previous experiences had helped to provide him with the skills needed to become the MP of Southend East and Rochford. In particular, Mr Alaba wants to use his business experiences to help cultivate housing in the city centre. He wants to boost the local economy, and to create a safer community, whereby the citizens of Southend are housed and have access to a thriving high street.

We asked Mr Alaba a range of questions put forward by social science students...

## Q: WHAT IS YOUR STANCE ON GRAMMAR SCHOOLS AS A LABOUR MP?

**A:** I wish I went to one when I was younger. I have a healthy respect for grammar schools, I like the people that they produce. I think in terms of pupils, they should be rewarded for the hard work they put in; it wasn't easy to pass your 11+ and to go into an establishment where you can improve your learning and improve yourself as a person and so I'm fully supportive of the grammar school

system, I don't have a problem with that. My caveat is it's not one or the other, I think we as a society need to think about state schools and the importance that they bring because they produce more people that are going to go into the workforce and we certainly need to focus on that but not to the detriment of grammar schools, grammar schools play an important role.

## Q: WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON THE ASSISTED DYING BILL AND WHY DID YOU VOTE NO?

**A:** It's a very important and highly emotive issue and subject. I voted no because I do appreciate that there is going to be really valid cases that make medical sense and emotional sense for the person concerned, so I have no problems with that. You know

it's not necessarily about protecting the sanctity of life; that's important, that goes without saying. The problem that I have is the unintended consequences, the impact it has on members of the family that are left behind. I know there's an argument around you've got to have a terminal illness with six months to live and you have two doctors and a judge, so I think those safeguards are great and there's a lot more work being done. The concern I have is the people left behind and the pressure it might put on the executors and children and partners and parents, some people feel that they might be doing their family a favour by choosing to end their lives earlier so I'm concerned about the impact and the void that comes from that person choosing to end their life. I think, yes, it's a very nuanced point, but I think that may become an issue in terms of wills and even that emotional connection.



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## Q. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO CELEBRATE CULTURE?

**A:** Culture gives you a sense of worth, a sense of purpose, a sense of pride and self esteem and culture comes in so many forms, so culture could be around language and food and culture could be around in the UK, football. Football is a huge institution and related to that is cultural, local identity. A lot of football clubs were formed from former companies and factory workers, so culture is very much about people's identity and history, so I think it's very important and depending on how it's framed culture also brings people together and animates communities whether you're talking about Notting Hill Carnival or talking about the Halloween parade in Southend. Culture touches so many people's lives, it could be music as well and what music does to your brain even if it's just the music you listen to on its own, so I think it's very important.



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## Q. ON YOUR WEBSITE YOU VISITED THE SOUTHEND FOOD BANK, WHAT MORE DO YOU THINK CAN BE DONE TO COMBAT POVERTY?

**A.** Southend is very good for third sector. The third sector in Southend is strong and vibrant, a lot of the charities work together. I've met a number of them, I don't really feel that the relationship between them is adversarial. But we shouldn't have food banks; they shouldn't exist. Food banks weren't really a thing when I was growing up, so it points to the fact that something is not working in our society. So, yes food banks work hard, and we need to champion the work that they do and the vital support that they provide people and families, but we also need to be thinking about how we stop people needing to use food banks. We need to think about how we raise the standard of living, how we enable people to have more meaningful work and



I'll answer your question in two parts: I think food banks are good and they need to be supported and they say something about the compassion in society, so it points to something quite good about communities but ultimately the fact that they exist says that something isn't working and so I think we also need to be thinking about the conditions that will mean that in 5-10 years time food banks are a thing of the past.



**A.** I would say it's not a sprint; it's a marathon. You don't have to be in a hurry to get into politics. It's important that you bring your authentic self, but the best version of yourself as well and there's so many different ways to come in. I've come into politics, and there's so many people who come into politics through industry; they've worked and run companies and then they've sort of transitioned into politics. There are people who have come in through the union routes, there are people who have come in through local government and housing associations. I think it doesn't really matter if people come in through services, they just need to understand that no matter what role you play in society in terms of work, your experience and mindset is valid in politics. So, if they want to enter politics, they should do so. They have something to bring or give and they should focus on that. In terms of how, there's no one perfect way, it's important that you work. The caveat to that is to try to be around people with similar goals to you, it gives you a bit of emotional support. But there's no one way to come into politics, you can come from any angle so just dip your toes in, get a bit of experience, see what it's like, set a time scale into politics when it's ready for you.

- 1) What do you think MPs could do to improve services for young people in the area you live in?
- 2) How could politics become more engaging for young people?
- 3) What are your thoughts on the proposed terminally ill adults (End of Life) bill?

**The Third Sector-** Organisations that are not funded by the state or by private businesses. They include charities and other voluntary organisations.

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